

256398-06/11/2025-EIAR Appendix 5.3 Tourism Impact Assessment Report



APPENDIX 5-3

TOURISM IMPACT ASESMENT REPORT

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Proposed Curraglass Wind Farm, Co. Cork

Tourism Impact Assessment



Prepared for MKO Ireland
by
CHL & Associates
July 2025

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1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1. The purpose of this Appendix is to provide tourism assessment and expertise to the EIAR for the Proposed Development, as outlined in Chapter 4 of this EIAR.
- 1.2. This Appendix has been prepared by CHL & Associates. It assesses the potential for impacts on tourism arising from the Proposed Development.
- 1.3. The application Site is located approximately 6.8km northeast of Kealkill and 3.8km southwest of Ballingeary and is approximately 270 hectares in total.
- 1.4. The Site was previously the location of a 10-turbine wind farm (as detailed in Section 1.1 of Chapter 1, the turbines were removed in June 2018).
- 1.5. The previous wind turbines at the Site were granted planning permission in 2002 and the Site was constructed and became operational in 2006. The turbines were removed in June 2018. The previous development consisted of 10 turbines, with a hub height of 50m and a total tip height of 75m. An application was made in 2020 for 7 turbines to Cork County Council, which was subsequently refused by An Coimisiún Pleanála (PI Ref 20/350 / ABP Ref. 308244-20 / ABP Ref. 315656).
- 1.6. A number of tourism related concerns were raised in the previous planning application (PI Ref 20/350 / ABP Ref. 308244-20 / ABP Ref. 315656) for the Site (note, this was for a project with a greater number of turbines). These concerns can be summarised under the five main headings considered below.
- 1.7. **Impact on key visitor attractions.** There was a concern that the 2020 application may have had a negative impact on the key visitor attractions of Gougane Barra, the Beara Breifne Way and walking trails in general (raised by Fáilte Ireland). These attractions have also been identified by CHL in this Tourism Impact Assessment (TIA) as the key tourism assets in the area and are assessed in Sections 7.7 and 7.8).
- 1.8. **Erosion of visual quality.** There was a concern that the 2020 application would be highly obtrusive in the landscape and would erode the visual quality of the landscape

(Inspector's Report 2024, ABP-315656-23). In response to this concern, the scale of the development has been significantly reduced, and this is reflected and assessed in Sections 7.9 and 7.10.

- 1.9. **Undermining of Gougane Barra and Bantry.** There was concern that the 2020 application would undermine the setting of Gougane Barra and the framing of the town of Bantry (Inspector's Report 2024, ABP-315656-23). See 8.2 below re. Gougane Barra. This TIA considers Bantry to be beyond any potential impact of the Proposed Development as it is 20kms away.
- 1.10. **Impact on scenic routes.** There is concern that the proposed turbines would be prominent from scenic routes, trails and the Wild Atlantic Way (Inspector's Report 2024, ABP-315656-23). CHL, in this TIA, has also identified a number of scenic routes as potentially significant tourism assets in the area and the potential impact of the Proposed Development on the routes has been assessed (see Sections 7.9 and 7.10). The main Wild Atlantic Way route is considered to be beyond the range of potential impact given its location along the coast and distance from the Site (see Figure 2).

2. Statement of Authority

- 2.1. CHL & Associates is a leading consultancy firm in tourism development, planning and implementation. Originally established in 1984 as CHL Consulting, CHL has worked extensively throughout the island of Ireland on tourism strategic planning and product development, including tourism and economic impact analyses.
- 2.2. This Tourism Impact Assessment has been prepared by Freya Watson, Director at CHL. Freya holds a BA(Hons) from UCD, a variety of ongoing CPD qualifications in Marketing, Finance, Project Management, Conflict Resolution and Branding, and has over thirty years' experience in tourism. Her work with CHL has included strategic and business plans, options appraisals, feasibility studies, audits, sectoral analyses and tourism plans. Her clients have included local authorities, government departments and other public bodies, as well as community and non-profit groups, and private investors. Prior to CHL, Freya held a variety of managerial positions with Fáilte Ireland, including in Destination Development, Heritage, and Innovation and Strategy.

3. Site Location

- 3.1. The Site is located in a southwest valley of the Shehy Mountains in West Cork, 6.8km northeast of the village of Kealkill and 3.8km southwest of the village of Ballingearry; and at the southern end of the Múscraí Gaeltacht.
- 3.2. It is accessible from the R584 between Ballingearry and Kealkill at the Pass of Keimaneigh, via a forest road through Coillte property.
- 3.3. The Coillte land is private, although it is used by some of the local community for recreational walking. There is no provision for car parking or other supporting amenities.
- 3.4. The Site is approximately 268 hectares, with elevations ranging from 111-347 OD¹, and surrounded by a number of prominent peaks, including Doughill, Douce, Foilastookeen and Conigar Mountains, Shehy More and Knockbreteen Hill.
- 3.5. The Site is not located within any Special Area of Conservation or Special Protection Areas. The nearest Natura 2000 Site, i.e. Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Area (SPA), is the Derryclogher (Knockboy) Bog SAC which is approximately 4.3km directly west of the Site and has blanket bog as the qualifying interest. The nearest national designated Site, i.e. Natural Heritage Area (NHA) or proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) is the Conigar Bog NHA which is approximately 816m west, located directly adjacent to the Site. Figure 2-2 shows the location of the Site in relation to designated areas within c.15-kilometres. The Site is located within a total of 4 no. Article 17 Habitats. The northeast section of the Site is located within 3 no. Article 17 habitats: Wet Heath, Dry heath, and Active Blanket Bog. The northwest section of the Site sits within 1 no. Article 17 habitat, the Alpine & Subalpine Heath Habitat.
- 3.6. From a County Development perspective, the Site is located within Landscape Character Area 15a: Ridged and Peaked Uplands.

¹ Ordnance datum.

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- 3.7. Any impact of the Proposed Development on the landscapes mentioned in 3.4 and 3.5, as well as other protected landscapes in the wider area, will be appropriately assessed as part of the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) process. This is relevant in the context of consideration of the landscape as a tourism asset.

4. Policy

- 4.1. The overall policy context pertaining to the Proposed Development is covered by a comprehensive policy and legislation review in Chapter 2 Background to the Proposed Development.
- 4.2. Within a policy context, the matter for consideration in this Appendix is the potential impact of the Proposed Development on tourism. Therefore, points below at 4.3 to 4.19 capture additional elements of policy specifically relating to tourism.
- 4.3. Tourism is clearly identified as an important element of the Irish economy and is frequently referred to in both the National Planning Framework First Revision (NPF)² and the National Development Plan 2021-2030 (NDP).
- 4.4. The NPF also identifies the importance to tourism of natural and built heritage: "Ireland has an abundance of iconic natural heritage areas...and cultural heritage sites...(and) there are many other nationally distinct areas, that are not only a key part of our cultural heritage but also important to our tourism industry..." Ireland's "archaeological heritage is" also recognised as 'a major cultural... resource'.
- 4.5. The NPF identifies a key policy for areas of the southwest traversed by the Wild Atlantic Way to be "integrated planning, management and development to maximise...the visitor experience". At the same time, it also identifies another key policy as "harnessing the potential of the region in renewable energy". Throughout the NPF there is an emphasis on needing to support rural living through diversification and by providing for balanced development in all areas: "The Irish countryside...will continue

² Published April 2025.

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to be a living and lived-in landscape...based on agriculture, forestry, energy, inland waterways, marine, tourism and rural enterprise." (Emphasis author's own).

- 4.6. NPF National Policy Objective 30 states: "Facilitate the development of the rural economy, in a manner consistent with the national climate objective, through supporting a sustainable and economically efficient agricultural and food sector, together with forestry, fishing and aquaculture, energy and extractive industries, the bio-economy and diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities, while at the same time noting the importance of maintaining and protecting biodiversity and the natural landscape and built heritage which are vital to rural tourism."
- 4.7. NPF National Policy Objective 73 further emphasises this requirement for appropriate sharing of the landscape: "Support the co-location of renewable technologies with other supporting technologies and complementary land uses, including agriculture, amenity, forestry and opportunities to enhance biodiversity and promote heritage assets, at appropriate locations..."
- 4.8. The NDP identifies that individual sector policies will be developed, including for tourism (see 4.10). These sectoral programs of investment are intended to: "Enhance well-being at individual and community level and promote social cohesion; advance an agenda for social, economic and environmental sustainability... while also supporting and enhancing guardianship of our unique cultural... heritage".
- 4.9. The NDP identifies a strategic investment priority to "support and grow tourism in rural communities..."
- 4.10. The new National Tourism Policy Framework 2025-2030 (NTPF) sets out policy proposals for the development of tourism in Ireland, in alignment with the principles and policies of the NPF and NDP, and other relevant national strategies and policies, as identified in the EIAR. It is structured around the three pillars: Environmental, Economic and Social.
- 4.11. The NTPF emphasises the economic and social value of tourism in Ireland, as well as the importance of ensuring that "Ireland is recognised as an authentic sustainable

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destination”, using the UNWTO definition of sustainable tourism as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities³.” This is the VICE model - Visitors, Industry, Community and Environment - increasingly found in tourism development strategies, which allows for an approach that enables balanced development.

- 4.12. The NTPF reiterates the importance of “Ireland’s natural environment (as) an essential component of the tourism offering”, stating that “Fáilte Ireland as a designated body under the Planning Acts will input as required to ensure development proposals do not damage Ireland’s habitats and protect the overall quality of the tourism offering”.
- 4.13. The NTPF highlights that the “tourism sector is also highly dependent on resilience in... areas such as our buildings, transport, biodiversity, water supply and energy infrastructure.” (Emphasis author’s own).
- 4.14. The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media supports Government policies and efforts in the area of tourism through its economic development agency, Fáilte Ireland.
- 4.15. Fáilte Ireland “recognises the importance of developing the State’s renewable energy sector and transition to a low carbon energy. It is the policy of Fáilte Ireland to support the sustainable development of electricity generation by sustainable and renewable sources and support its contribution towards a sustainable energy supply at appropriate locations and in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development”.
- 4.16. In the context of the Proposed Development, Fáilte Ireland’s Wild Atlantic Way Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027 (WAWRTDS) is the most relevant strategic document as the Site lies within this designated tourism region.
- 4.17. The WAWRTDS adopts the VICE model as its framework for tourism development and aligns with the UNWTO definition of sustainable tourism (see 4.11).

³ “Managing tourism development for sustainable and inclusive recovery”, OECD Tourism Papers, No. 2021/01.

- 4.18. WAWRTDS Strategic Objective 4 is to “protect the cultural authenticity and ‘wildness’ of the Wild Atlantic Way”.
- 4.19. The WAWRTDS also identifies the development of a number of Destination and Experience Development Plans (DEDP) for specific regions, one of which is West Cork. The DEDPs ground the ambitions and strategic direction of the WAWRTDS into a series of priority projects at a more localised level.
- 4.20. The West Cork and Kenmare Destination and Experience Development Plan (WCKDEDP) incorporates two older Plans that were active in the area: the Three Peninsulas DEDP and the Múscraí Gaeltacht Tourism Action Plan (see Section 6 below). It provides prioritised actions for the area outlined in Figure 1, encompassing the Proposed Development Site.

5. Definitions and Assessment Method

- 5.1. Fáilte Ireland’s EIA/ EIAR Guidelines for the Consideration of Tourism and Tourism Related Projects⁴ provides guidance for those conducting EIA/EIAR for projects that may have an impact on tourism, and this guidance is integrated into the approach adopted for this TIA.
- 5.2. An immediate study area of 5kms of the Site is considered for direct impacts. However, the tourism context of the Site is considered from the wider perspective of visitors touring the area and also in the context of tourism in West Cork, an area defined for tourism purposes by the WCKDEDP (see Figure 1 for illustration).
- 5.3. In order to bring clarity to the assessment of the tourism impact of a proposed development, it is necessary to be clear about the terminology used. The following definitions apply in this TIA.

⁴ EIA/ EIAR Guidelines for the Consideration of Tourism and Tourism Related Projects, Fáilte Ireland, July 2023.

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- 5.3.1. **Visitor:** A visitor is a traveller taking a trip to a main destination outside his/her usual environment, for less than a year, for any main purpose (business, leisure or other personal purpose) other than to be employed by a resident entity in the country or place visited. These trips taken by visitors qualify as tourism trips⁵.
- 5.3.2. **Tourism:** Tourism refers to the activity of visitors⁶.
- 5.3.3. **Tourist:** A visitor is classified as a tourist if his/her trip includes an overnight stay⁷.
- 5.3.4. **Tourism asset:** A tourism asset can be considered to refer to anything that attracts visitors and contributes to the country's tourism industry. This includes core tourism infrastructure such as accommodation and restaurants, tourism activities and destinations, as well as the natural and built heritage, and intangible elements.
- 5.4. Note that these definitions exclude local residents from being considered as visitors or as falling within the parameters of tourism, although local residents may use recreational amenities and enjoy products and services that can be also considered tourism assets. This is particularly relevant when considering the high footfall experienced by trails and outdoor amenity spaces that may attract a high level of repeat local business. Popularity of a trail or amenity space does not, of itself, mean that it is popular with tourists.
- 5.5. The approach adopted in this TIA is to follow the five steps below, in line with the guidance from Fáilte Ireland and the EPA⁸.

⁵ *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics*, UNWTO.

⁶ *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics*, UNWTO.

⁷ *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics*, UNWTO.

⁸ *Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports*, EPA. See also Footnote 4.

- 5.5.1. Establish the baseline character of the area from a tourism perspective (see 6A below).
- 5.5.2. Establish the significance of any tourism assets or activities likely to be affected by the Proposed Development (see 6B below).
- 5.5.3. Determine whether the Proposed Development impacts on any assets/activities identified at 5.4.2. (see 7 below).
- 5.5.4. Assess whether the impact significantly compromises the tourism importance or value of the assets/activities identified at 5.4.2. (See 7 below).
- 5.5.5. Address any significant and known concerns or oppositions to the Proposed Development in the area and the proposed cumulative impact. (See 8 below).
- 5.6. In establishing whether a feature is a tourism asset, we will be guided by the previous points in relation to what tourism is, and by how strategy relating to tourism in Ireland identifies what is of relevance to visitors (in particular 5.1, 4.4 and 4.18 above).
- 5.7. In gauging the importance or value of a tourism asset, the following factors can be used.
 - 5.7.1. The asset's existing performance in terms of attracting visitors, as measured by visitor numbers.
 - 5.7.2. If the above is not available, a proxy measure is the extent of tourism infrastructure and demand in the area (accommodation, attractions, activities etc.).
 - 5.7.3. In addition to 5.5.2 above, the asset's visibility and profile for consumers is a further proxy measure to the importance of tourism (e.g. through established tourism websites).

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- 5.8. In considering potential impact (Sections 7 and 8 below), this TIA will follow as far as is practical the advice laid out by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)⁹. These identify impact characteristics in terms of quality, significance, extent and context, probability, duration and frequency.
- 5.9. In support of the desk research carried out for this TIA, CHL also undertook an inspection of the Site and wider area. This took place on Friday 2nd and Saturday 3rd May 2025, under good weather conditions and excellent visibility.

6. Baseline Assessment of Tourism in the Area

6A Character

- 6.1. Fáilte Ireland identifies beautiful scenery and natural and un-spoilt landscape as the primary reasons tourists visit and enjoy Ireland¹⁰, and an area's strength in these will help to support tourism.
- 6.2. The Site is located in within the wider West Cork Region - an established tourism destination featuring a number of tourism hubs that are located along the popular coastal route from Kinsale to Bantry and on towards Kenmare in County Kerry. West Cork is identified by Fáilte Ireland in the WCKDEDP as encompassing the area illustrated in Figure 1.

⁹ Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, EPA.

¹⁰ Overseas Holidaymakers' Attitudes to Ireland, Fáilte Ireland.

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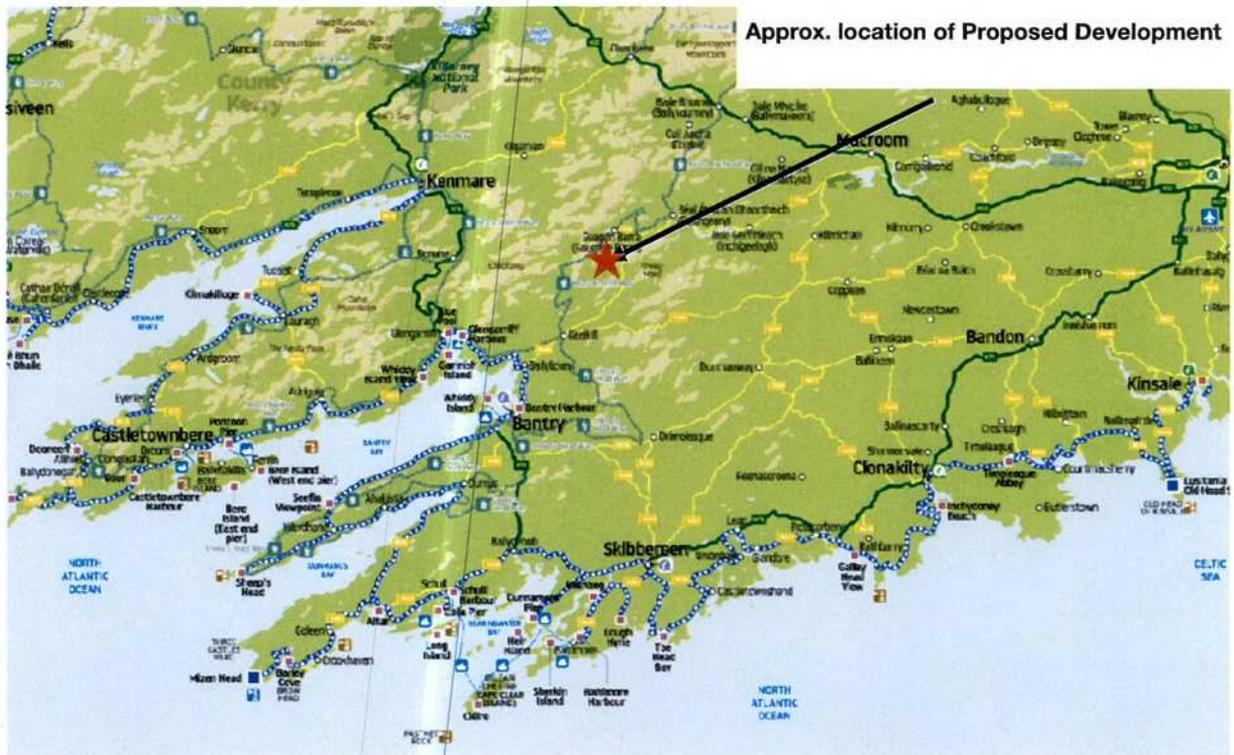
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FIGURE 1: WEST CORK¹¹, ILLUSTRATING SITE LOCATION



6.3. West Cork is recognised as a popular summer destination for domestic families and as an attractive region for its coastal scenery and supporting outdoor activities, including: walking, cycling, sailing and other water-based activities. It also has a reputation for food and artisan crafts. It appeals to a wide age range, with 33% of domestic trips being taken by unconstrained adults aged over 45 years and 40% by families¹². It is also a popular destination for tourists visiting friends and family, with 33% of overseas visitors to County Cork mainly in Ireland for that reason¹³.

6.4. Most of this activity is clustered along the coast and in the main coastal towns of Clonakilty, Skibbereen and Bantry. Specific locations have developed reputations for outdoor activity and for culture, in particular: Sheep's Head and the area around

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¹¹ West Cork and Kenmare Destination and Experience Development Plan, p.03, October 2023, Fáilte Ireland; <https://www.failteireland.ie/Regional-experience-brands/Wild-Atlantic-Way/Wild-Atlantic-Way-experience-development/West-Cork-and-Kenmare-DEDP.aspx>. Site location added separately.

¹² Cork Key Tourism Facts 2023, Fáilte Ireland.

¹³ Cork Key Tourism Facts 2023, Fáilte Ireland.

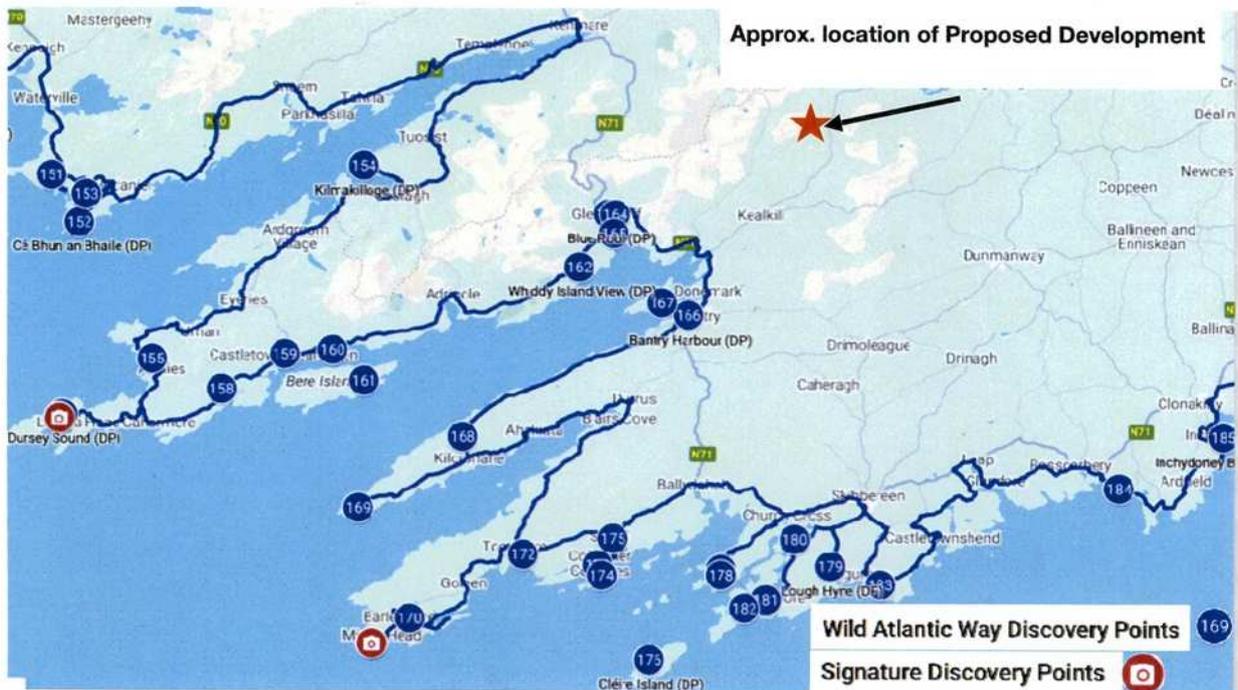
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Bantry for walking; Schull, Baltimore and Rosscarbery for waterbased activity; and Skibbereen and Clonakilty for culture, food and shopping.

- 6.5. West Cork is also the starting point for a journey westwards and northwards on the designated Wild Atlantic Way touring route - see Figure 2 - with visitors being encouraged to explore away from the popular coastal route.

FIGURE 2: WEST CORK SECTION OF THE WILD ATLANTIC WAY



- 6.6. The more western part of West Cork is identified as being at an early stage of tourism development with a low tourism profile, and some domestic market recognition: classified as Aspiring or Pioneering by Fáilte Ireland in the WCKDEDP. This contrasts with the eastern part of the region which is considered to have greater tourism recognition and designated as either Progressing or Enhancing¹⁴

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¹⁴ "The eastern half of West Cork & Kenmare falls broadly into either the Progressing or Enhancing categories (established destinations with good domestic market recognition or a high international recognition factor). The western half of West Cork and Kenmare is categorised into Aspiring or Pioneering categories (destinations with low profile and destination recognition or good domestic market recognition)", WCKDEDP.

- 6.7. The WCKDEDP recognises that tourism in the region is also highly seasonal: “Visitation to most parts of West Cork & Kenmare with the exception of Kinsale, tends to be seasonal with a high proportion of day trippers”.
- 6.8. The long term vision outlined for the region in the WCKDEDP is that it will be “recognised as a leading national outdoor activity destination through the quality of its outdoor trails and on-water experiences” and as a “premier food in tourism destination”.
- 6.9. Looking at the Site location more specifically, as outlined in 3.1-3.4 above, the Proposed Development of Curraglass Renewable Energy is located in a remote and mountainous area of West Cork, accessible from the R584 between Ballingearry and Kealkill, and over 5kms from both villages.
- 6.10. It can be noted again that the Site is not located within a protected landscape, as referenced in 3.5 above and addressed in detail in the EIAR.

6B Significance

- 6.11. Visitor numbers are not published below county level and therefore tourism estimates are not available either for the Study Area associated with the Proposed Development or more broadly for West Cork.
- 6.12. Visitor numbers for County Cork - including Cork City - illustrate the significance of the County as a whole from a tourism perspective. In 2023, there were over 1.7 million domestic trips and 891,000 overseas visitors to County Cork.
- 6.13. In the absence of visitor numbers at sub-county level, the distribution of tourism accommodation and visitor attractions can be considered as they provide an opportunity to quantify tourism in particular locations and to establish their significance in tourism terms.

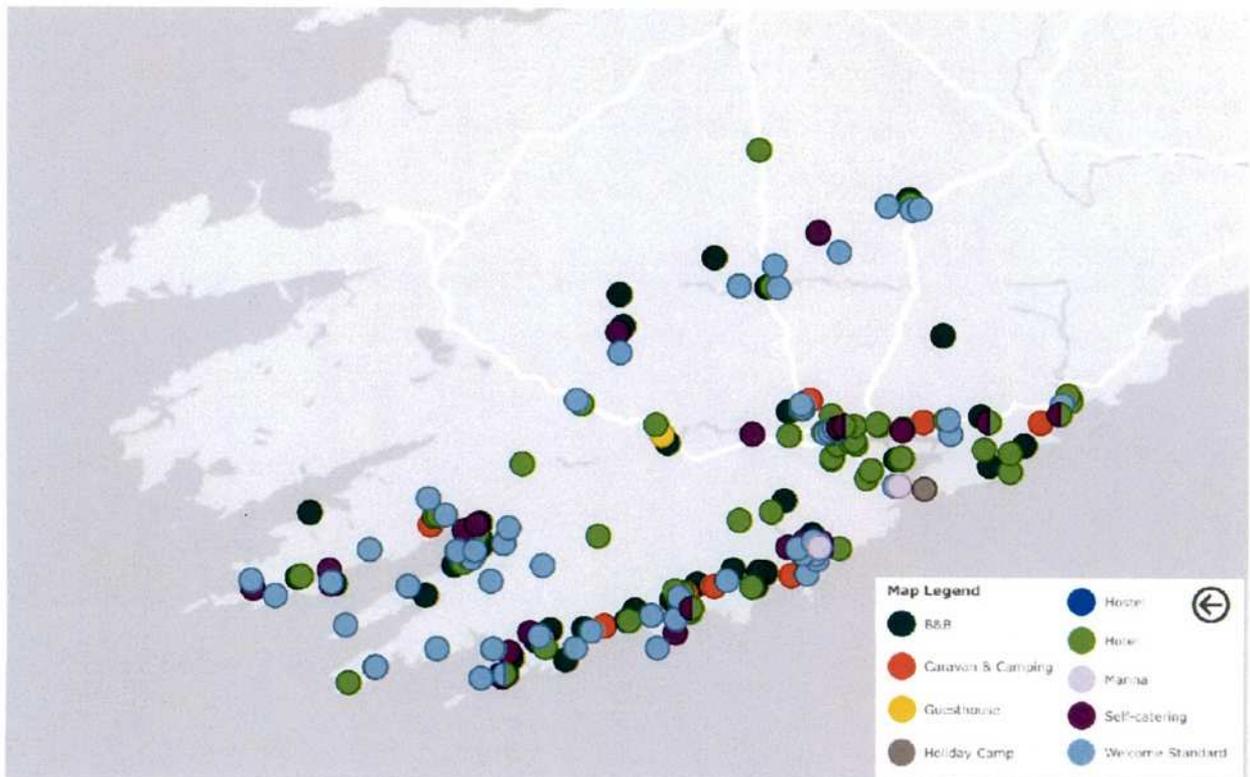
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6.14. Tourism accommodation is a prerequisite for tourism as it provides the necessary infrastructure to support overnight stays. Conversely, operators will only invest in providing tourism accommodation if there is sufficient visitor demand in an area.

6.15. County Cork has an approximate nightly bed capacity of over 20,000 beds, 39% of which is in Cork City. Outside of the City, tourist accommodation is distributed primarily along the coast, as illustrated in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF TOURIST ACCOMMODATION IN COUNTY CORK¹⁵



6.16. Looking specifically within the Study Area associated with the Proposed Development, there is one tourist accommodation premises within 5 km of the Site: the Gougane Barra Hotel. This suggests that the immediate area is not highly significant in tourism terms, although it does indicate that there is a certain level of tourism (see further discussion in relation to Gougane Barra as a tourism asset at 6.22 below).

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¹⁵ Tourist accommodation registered with Fáilte Ireland, 2025.

- 6.17. Outside of registered tourist accommodation, there are an additional eight Airbnb premises within the Study Area. This is a form of accommodation that is speculative in nature and is currently undergoing significant change with the introduction of the Short-Term Letting and Tourism Bill 2025¹⁶. It is not possible to determine how many of the eight premises in the area will remain in business following the full implementation of this Bill. Currently, the eight premises are located in Ballineary (one hut and one loft), Kealkill (one cabin, one guest suite, one cottage, one house) and at Douce Mountain (one cabin and one farmhouse).
- 6.18. The Bantry/Ballylickey/Glengarriff area - approximately 14-20 kms away from the Site - is the closest hub of tourism activity as gauged by the clustering of tourist accommodation, illustrated in Figure 4 and Table 1. It can be noted that a significant proportion of accommodation in this area is accounted for by caravan and camping, suggesting a thriving domestic family market that is more interested in coast and sea than inland touring.
- 6.19. Looking westwards to County Kerry, the closest accommodation hub is Kenmare - over 40kms away from the Site. There are also individual properties located in Lauragh, Tuosist and Kilgarvan - but these are also well beyond the range of impact of the Proposed Development

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¹⁶ The General Scheme of Short Term Letting and Tourism Bill 2025, Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment.

FIGURE 4: DISTRIBUTION OF TOURIST ACCOMMODATION IN THE STUDY AREA AND SURROUNDS¹⁷

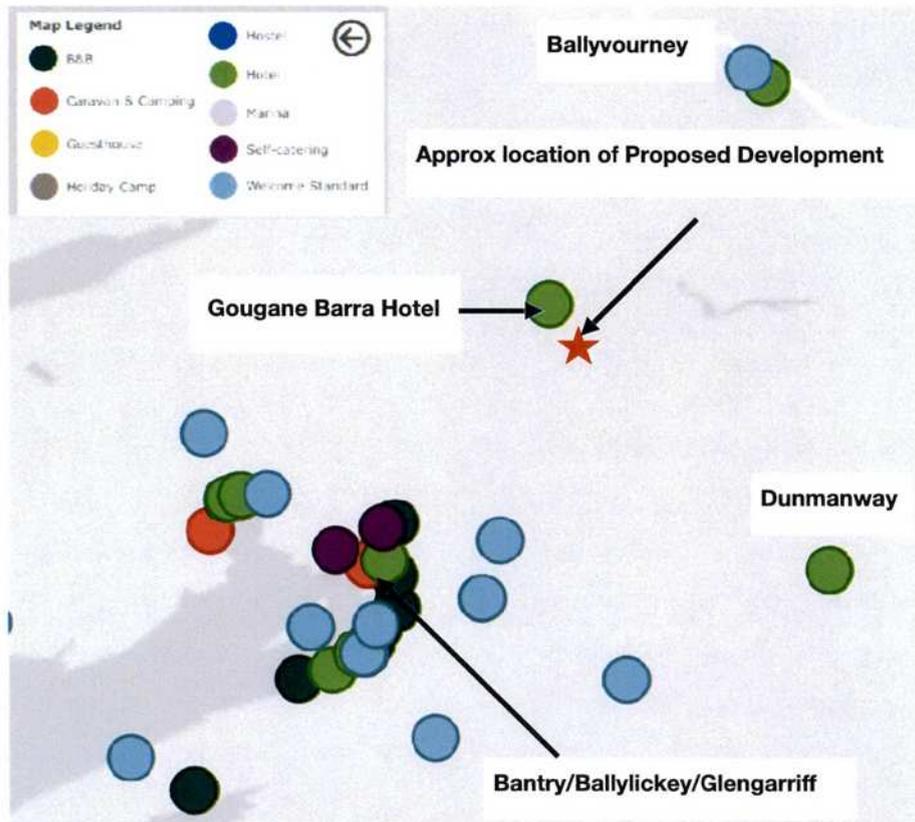


TABLE 1: LOCATION OF TOURIST ACCOMMODATION IN THE WIDER PROJECT AREA¹⁸

Town/Area	Number of Beds	% of County Cork Total (excl. City)
Bantry	684	5.6%
-of which hotels	471	
Ballylickey	661	5.4%
-of which hotels	45	
Glengarriff	606	5.0%
-of which hotels	217	
Ballyvourney	120	1.0%
Dunmanway	43	0.4%

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¹⁷ Tourist accommodation registered with Fáilte Ireland, 2025.

¹⁸ Tourist accommodation registered with Fáilte Ireland, 2025.

- 6.19. The location of and visitor demand levels at visitor attractions, provide further methods of quantifying tourism activity in an area in order to assess significance. A review of visitor attractions across County Cork (excluding the city) clearly identifies that the top attractions are located at a considerable distance from the Site - see Table 2, which identifies attractions in Blarney, Carrigtwohill and Doneraile as the most visited.
- 6.20. Published data from recognised sources - Fáilte Ireland¹⁹, the Association of Visitor Experiences and Attractions (AVEA)²⁰ and the Office of Public Works (OPW)²¹ - does not identify any visitor attraction in the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Development. Those closest are over 20km away and are of a much lower level of visitor demand than the most popular attractions (see Table 2).

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¹⁹ Fáilte Ireland, <https://www.failteireland.ie/Research-Insights/Activities/visitor-numbers-to-attractions-dashboard.aspx>.

²⁰ AVEA, https://avea.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/2023_AVEA_Members_Survey_Final.pdf.

²¹ OPW, <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/visitor-numbers-2024-final.pdf>.

TABLE 2: TOP VISITOR ATTRACTIONS IN COUNTY CORK & WIDER PROJECT AREA²²

Visitor Attraction & Location	Distance from Proposed Site	Number of Months Open	Number of Visitors
<i>Top County Attractions:</i>			
Doneraile Park, Doneraile	90km	n/a	523,800
Blarney Castle & Gardens	62km	12	470,000
Fota Wildlife Park, Carrigtwohill	85km	12	430,024
<i>Attractions in the Wider Area:</i>			
Mizen Head Visitor Centre	67km	10	77,178
Garnish Island, Glengarriff	30km	7	69,981*
Bantry House & Gardens, Bantry	25km	7	21,580
Prince August Toy Soldier Factory & Visitor Centre,	21km	12	6,700

6.21. The absence of any visitor attraction in the immediate area identifiable through official data sources indicates that the area is not of high tourism significance, as at 6.15 above.

6.22. However, it is also important to consider the existence of other potential tourism assets that may not be captured through official sources of accommodation and visitor attractions data. Amenities and heritage sites that would be of interest to tourists are two further categories that need to be considered in assessing the tourism significance of the Proposed Development and surrounding area, and a review of tourism and trail websites indicates two that can be considered significant.

- St. Fin Barre's Oratory & Gougane Barra Forest Park. There is no visitor number data available for St. Fin Barre's Oratory. Most recent data for the Forest Park is over ten years old and indicates approx. 63,000 visitors to the Park (Fáilte Ireland, 2010). This makes it a relatively significant tourism asset and, indeed, its reputation would support this.

²² Annual Visitor Attractions Survey: Analysis of 2023, Fáilte Ireland. Except *, which is from OPW, 2024.

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- The Breifne Way. The Beara Breifne Way is a 700km linear trail stretching between Cavan and Cork, with sections that also act as locally branded trails, in this case Slí Gaeltacht Mhúscraí, Sheep's Head Way and St. Finbarr's Way. The section of the trail from Kealkill to Gougane Barra passes by the Site (see Figures 5 and 6). It is considered to be a challenging/strenuous section and takes over 5 hours to complete. Only experienced walkers are likely to attempt these trails and they would not be considered part of a mainstream tourism market. The vast majority of walkers (85%) prefer short walks of 1km-5kms²³.

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²³ Tourism Masterplan for the Beara Breifne Way, Fáilte Ireland.

FIGURE 5: ST. FINBARR'S WAY / SLÍ GAELTACHT MHUSCRAÍ

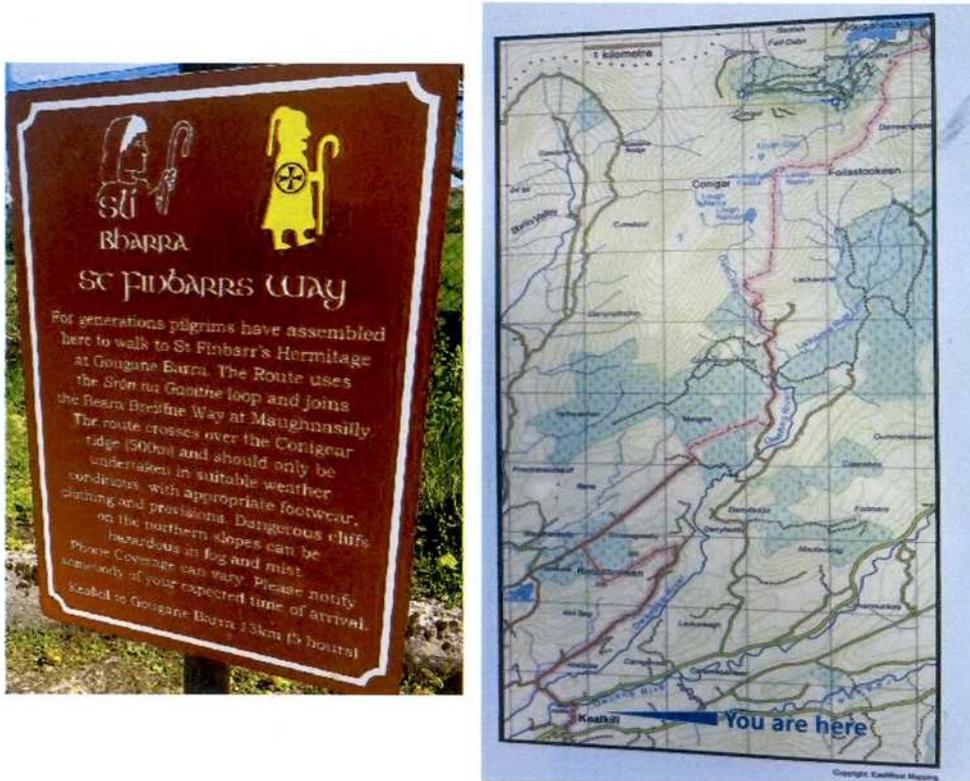
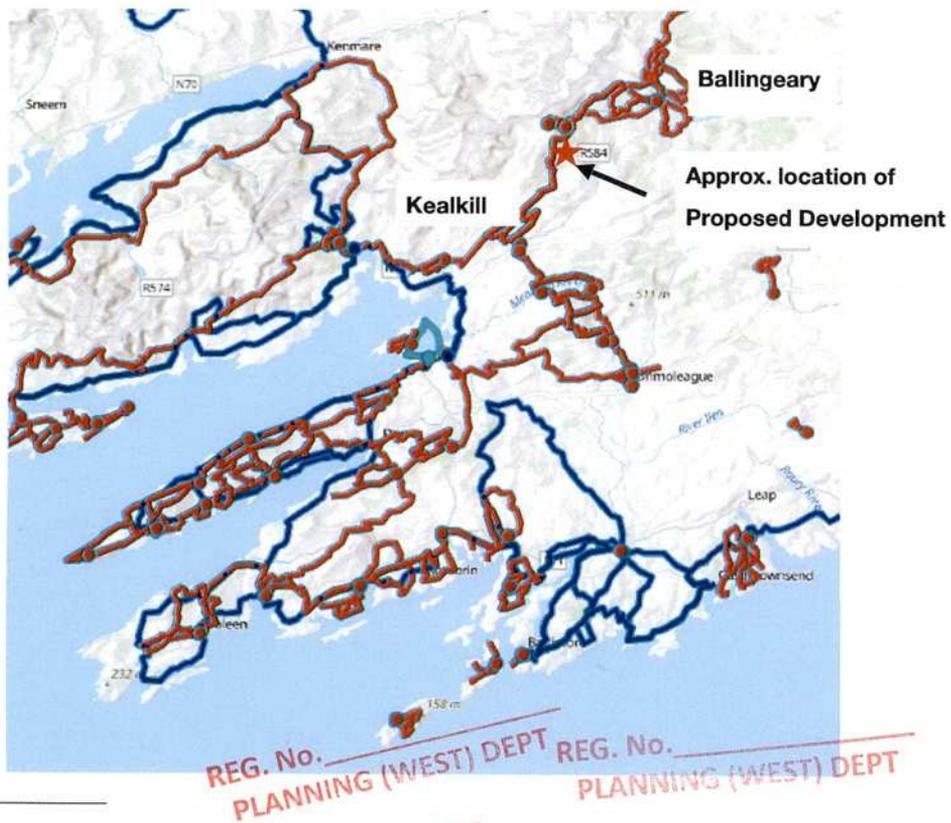


FIGURE 6: WALKING (RED) & CYCLING (BLUE) TRAILS IN THE WIDER DEVELOPMENT AREA²⁴



²⁴ Sport Ireland.

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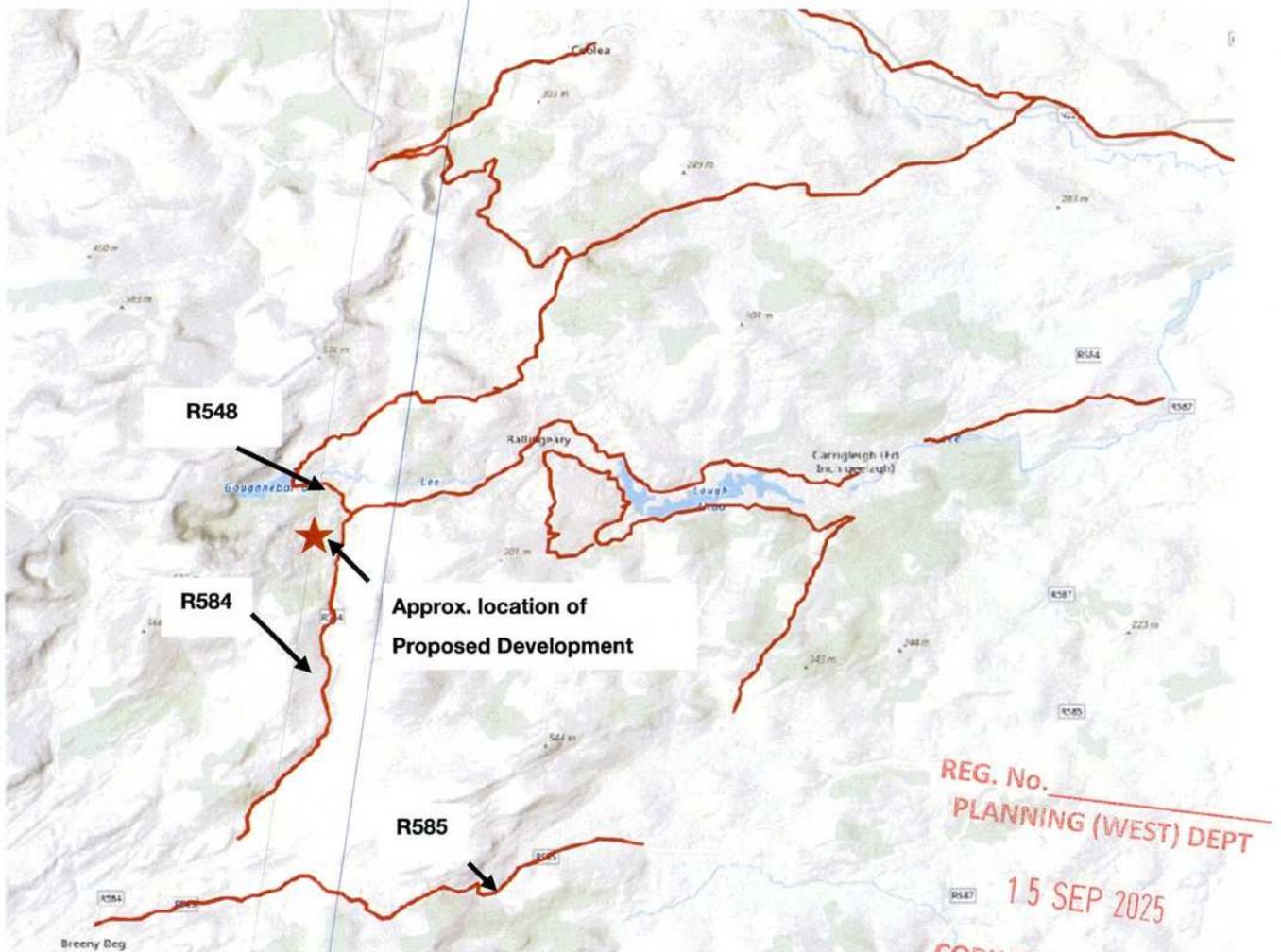
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6.23. In addition to the two assets at 6.22, a number of scenic routes are identified as significant in the CDP, one of which passes by the entrance to the Site: this is the R584 between Ballingearry and Kealkill, passing through the Pass of Keimaneigh. A second route also needs to be considered, which is the R548, north of the Site to Gougane Barra. A third scenic route along the R585, further away to the southeast, may also be taken into consideration. See Figure 7.

FIGURE 7: SCENIC ROUTES, CDP²⁵



6.24. A review of the immediate development area through the Government’s Historic Environment Viewer does not identify any significant heritage assets on or near the Site other than those at Gougane Barra. The Viewer was accessed on 23rd May 2025.

²⁵ ESRI, <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/mapviewer/index.html?layers=f2eb3722297b4111baa83dec593b270a>.

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6.25. There are a number of other sites and potential tourism assets which appear under a more general review of the area (online and site visit, both to the Site itself and to the area). However, these are beyond the immediate area of the project (+5km away) and not considered to be significant tourism assets. They include the following.

- Carriganass Castle in Kealkill, which is a ruined castle that is being cared for and presented by the local community. The on-site information office was closed when CHL visited and showed signs of having been closed for some time.
- Both Ballingearry and Kealkill act as trailheads with supporting parking and a number of shorter looped walks, e.g. the Ballingearry Loops.
- Mehigan's Island, a tree-covered crannóg in Lough Allua, Ballingearry, which is also used as a kayak/canoe destination by outdoor activity operator, Outdoor Discovery Adventure based in Inchigeelagh.
- Local amenity/picnic areas, e.g. at Ballingearry and Kealkill. These are unlikely to have any tourism appeal, other than as a stop-off point if passing.
- The Múscraí Gaeltacht could be considered to be a tourism asset as it is culturally significant. However, it is not promoted as such and there is evidence that it has no tourism recognition: "No (visitor) breakdown exists for Múscraí. Nonetheless, it can be surmised that the vast majority of these did not set foot in Múscraí. Indeed, in a question from a 2012 survey by Fáilte Ireland asking 567 tourists 'is there any one thing about West Cork in particular that [they] would advise other holidaymakers to do or see?' no one said Múscraí. That being so, Gougane Barra did appear prominently in the same survey²⁶."

6.26. A final test of significance is the degree to which the area appears as a tourism asset in tourism strategies for the area. Neither the WCKDEDP nor the Three Peninsulas DEDP

²⁶ Múscraí Heritage Plan: Conservation, Management and Interpretation Plan 2018-2032, Cork County Council & Acadamh Fódhla

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mention Kealkill, Ballingeary or Gougane Barra (although they do feature a photo of Gougane Barra).

- 6.27. In the Tourism Development and Implementation Plan for Gaeltacht Mhúscraí, Gougane Barra is referenced as a unique selling point. Ballingeary is also referenced as warranting some support for trail development.

7. Potential Impacts of Proposed Development

- 7.1. Having assessed the tourism character of the Proposed Development and its surrounding area, and the significance of tourism assets located there, we now address the subsequent steps in assessing potential impact, namely: whether the Proposed Development will impact the identified assets and, if so, to what degree.
- 7.2. A key consideration in determining whether a Proposed Development will have an impact on tourism is whether tourists' experiences are affected by the nature of the development. In the case of the Proposed Development, therefore, tourists' attitudes to wind farms and turbines must be considered.
- 7.3. The most recent research in Ireland in this regard is Fáilte Ireland's Visitor Attitudes on the Environment: Wind Farms (2012). The following are key findings in relation to the impact of wind turbines on the experience of visitors.

- 56% of visitors saw a wind farm while on holiday in Ireland.
- Most wind farms seen by visitors were seen from a car (84%), indicating only a brief encounter as they drove past. Only 6% are seen while walking and the same proportion while cycling.
- Almost half of visitors said that seeing wind farms had no impact on their holiday (48%), and 32% said it had a positive impact.

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- “Seven out of 10 (or 71%) of visitors claim that potentially greater numbers of wind farms in Ireland over the next few years would have either no impact or a positive impact on their likelihood to visit Ireland. Of those who feel that the potentially greater number of wind farms would impact positively on future visits, the key driver is support for renewable energy, followed by potential decreased carbon emissions.”
- While the majority of visitors are clearly not negatively impacted by wind farms, there is a smaller proportion who considered they had a negative impact on their sightseeing experience (21%), and therefore “the challenge... lies in striking a balance between the maintenance of landscape character and scenery as a tourism asset, and facilitating the development of further wind farms to ensure Ireland meets its GHG reduction targets”.

7.4. More recent international studies further support the findings of the earlier Fáilte Ireland research that wind farms can be considered to have a generally neutral impact on tourism. The following are only a selection of many such studies.

7.4.1. A 2020 UK study published in the Journal of Sustainable Tourism had this to say: “The overarching conclusion in the extant literature that there is no evidence that tourists and tourism economies are positively or negatively affected by the development of onshore-wind- farms in rural UK landscapes is clearly at variance with the way tourists’ views are represented by local anti-onshore-windfarm discourses...²⁷”

7.4.2. Another 2020 study by the University of Iceland²⁸, reviewing international experience, confirms that “Most existing studies show rather low effects of wind farms on tourists’ decision-making to visit the area”. The study also had this to say: “visual impacts on the landscape and its character are identified as the most important impacts of wind turbines on tourism by visitors and local

²⁷ Tom Mordue, Oliver Moss & Lorraine Johnston (2020) ‘The impacts of onshore-windfarms on a UK rural tourism landscape: objective evidence, local opposition, and national politics’, Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 28:11, 1882-1904, DOI:10.1080/09669582.2020.1769110.

²⁸ Edita Tverijonaite, Anna Dóra Sæþórsdóttir (2020), ‘Interrrelationships of onshore wind farms with tourism and recreation: lessons from international experience for countries with an emerging wind energy sector’.

tourism stakeholders” and that “the most suitable combination of height, number, colour and distance from main tourist attractions and viewpoints should be identified for each specific project and location”.

7.4.3. A slightly older study from Wales (2014) has a number of relevant points to make. Firstly, the “study has shown that the areas most affected by wind farms (currently and in the next decade) account for a very small proportion of Wales’s total visitor economy.” In other words, wind farms tend to be located away from areas of tourism concentration or where more lucrative uses of land might be a possibility. Secondly, “the evidence base shows a clear majority of people do not react negatively to wind farm developments or change their visiting behaviour as a result. However, it also shows that visitor responses and reactions to wind farms are highly subjective and depend on the individual’s own judgements and perceptions of the relative merits of onshore wind as a means of energy production”. It also found “no evidence that wind farms on visitor routes deter tourists”, nor “any evidence of a fall in visitor numbers as a result of disruption during construction”.

7.5. The assessment of the tourism character and significance of the area in the vicinity of the Proposed Development location at Section 6 above illustrates that it can be considered to be of low tourism significance. The closest tourism hub is Bantry is over 20kms away and beyond the range of potential impact.

7.6. However, a small number of tourism assets have been identified in the immediate area as significant, and these require further assessment in relation to potential impact from the Proposed Development. These are:

- The Gougane Barra Site, including the hotel, café, oratory, lake, forest park and other features (see 6.22 above and assessed at 7.7 below) - the lake lies 1.6km north of the Site at its closest point
- The section of the Beara Breifne Way known as Slí Gaeltacht Mhúscraí/Sheep’s Head Way/St. Finbarr’s Way (see 6.22 above and assessed at 7.8 below)

- Scenic routes as identified in the CDP along R584 through the Pass of Keimaneigh and R548 to Gougane Barra. A secondary consideration is the scenic route along the R585. (See 6.23 above and assessed at 7.9 and 7.10 below)

7.7. Gougane Barra. As outlined in Table 3 below, it is not considered that the Proposed Development will have an impact on the Gougane Barra Site (including hotel, café, oratory, lake and forest park). As a result, it can be considered to also have a neutral impact on its tourism value.

TABLE 3: ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL IMPACT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ON GOUGANE BARRA SITE

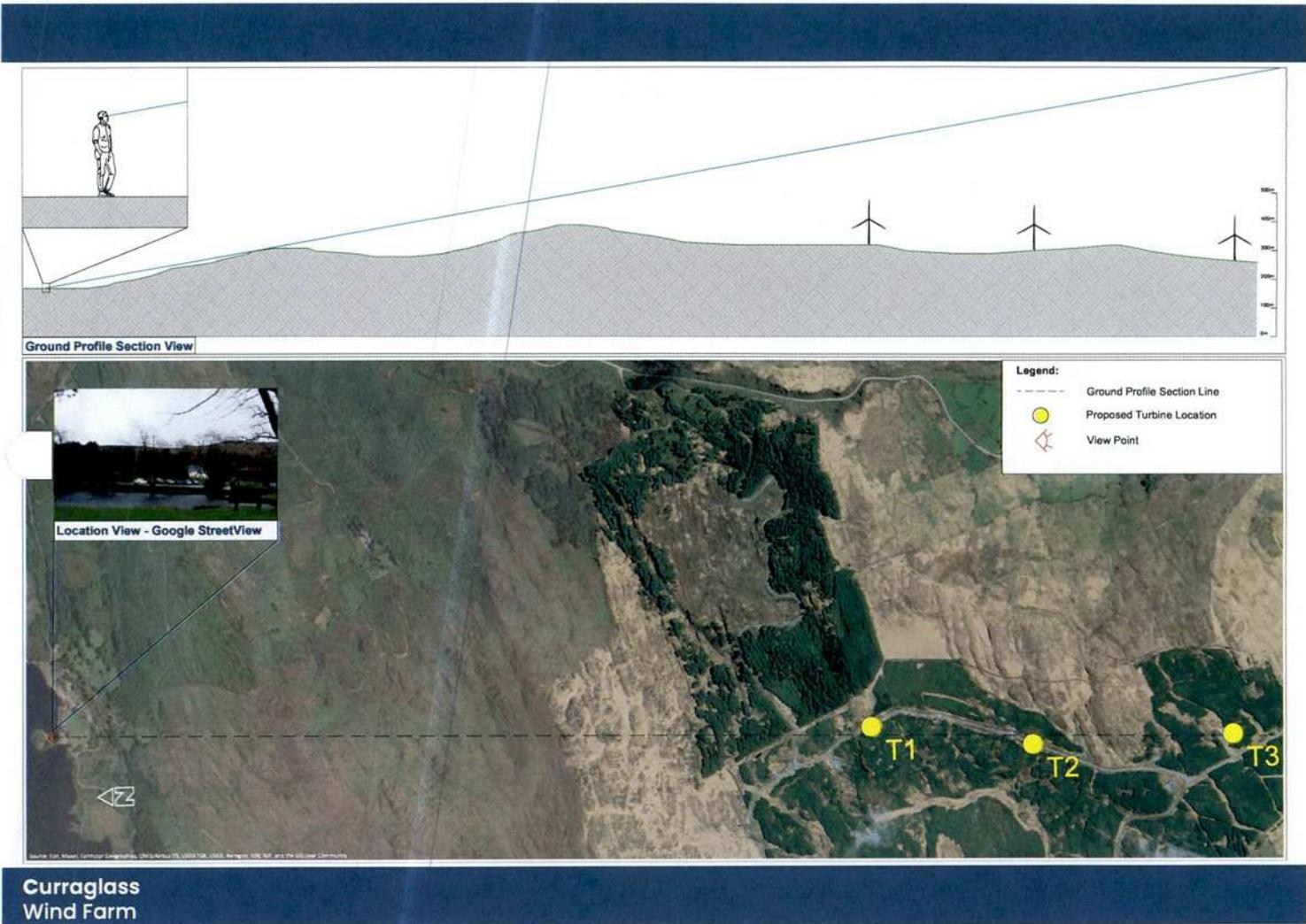
Characteristic	Impact	Description
Quality	Neutral	<p>Considering the proposed location of the three turbines, the height of surrounding landscape and the line of sight from Gougane Barra (taking the Oratory as the viewing location), the turbines will not be visible from Gougane Barra, and therefore no impact is anticipated.</p> <p>The potential visibility of the turbines has been assessed by MKO (see Figure 8 below). It has also been further assessed by CHL on a Site inspection (see Figure 9 below). It can also be noted that no turbines from existing wind farms were visible from the location.</p>
Significance	Imperceptible	
Extent and Context	No impact expected	
Probability	No impact expected	
Duration and frequency	No impact expected	
Type	No impact expected	

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FIGURE 8: SECTION VIEW FROM ST. FINBARR'S ORATORY²⁹



²⁹ MKO.

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FIGURE 9: VIEW FROM GOUGANE BARRA TOWARDS PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT LOCATION
Illustrating steep gradient of surrounding landscape (cronin's café & gougane barra hotel visible behind trees)³⁰



7.8. Beara Breifne Way. As outlined in Table 4 below, it is considered that the Proposed Development has potential to have a negative impact on the local section of the Beara Breifne Way. However, as the impact is not expected to be significant due to the low visitor numbers using the trail (ref. 6.22 above) and the lack of evidence that wind farms are perceived as negative by tourists (ref. 7.3 and 7.4 above), the impact on the tourism value of the trail is considered to be not significant.

³⁰ CHL Site Visit, May 2025.

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TABLE 4: ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL IMPACT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF CURRAGLASS RENEWABLE ENERGY ON LOCAL SECTION OF THE BEARA BREIFNE WAY

Characteristic	Impact	Description
Quality	Negative	The local section of the Beara Breifne Way passes over Foilastookeen to the west and northwest of the Proposed Development location. The turbines will be visible to varying degrees to walkers along the route for a distance of approx. 10km or between 2-3hrs, dependent on weather conditions. Figures 10 and 11 illustrate the potential visibility from a distance on the trail. Figure 12 illustrates the trail route.
Significance	Not significant	
Extent and Context	The turbines will be visible to varying degrees for approx. 10kms of the trail. Expected low visitor numbers affected due to low level of demand for linear walking trails in Ireland.	
Probability	Likely	
Duration and frequency	Long term, i.e. the lifespan of the wind farm. See also Extent and Context. There will be a moderate temporary impact during the construction phase.	

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FIGURE 10: PHOTOMONTAGE AT 90° ILLUSTRATING VIEW FROM SOUTHWEST OF TURBINES³¹

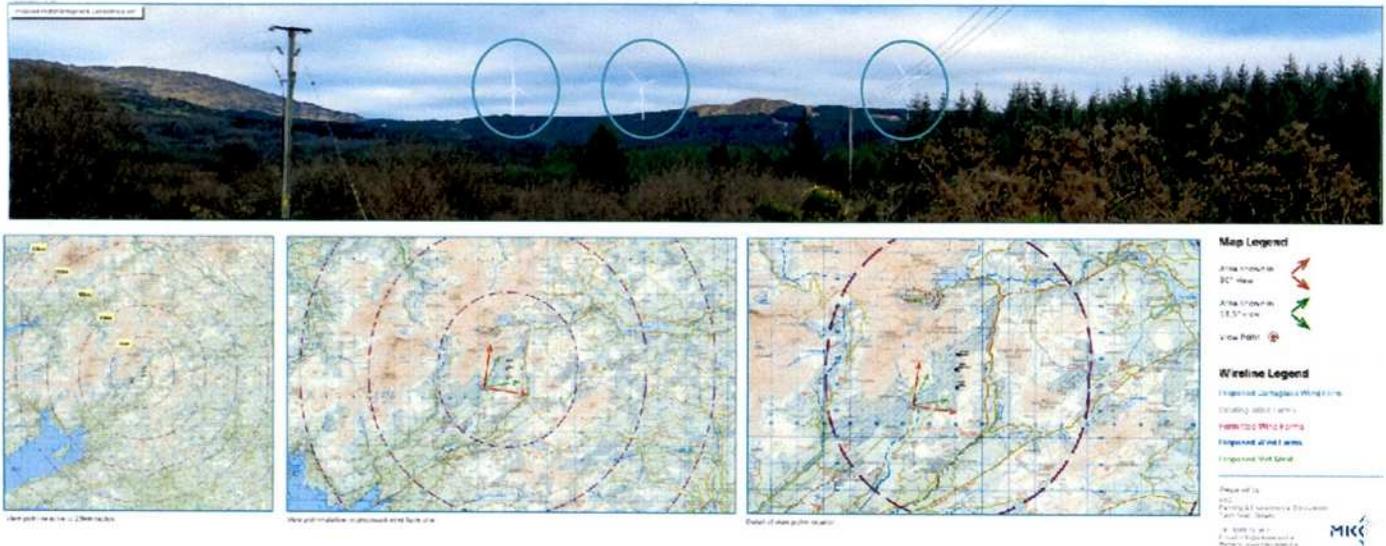
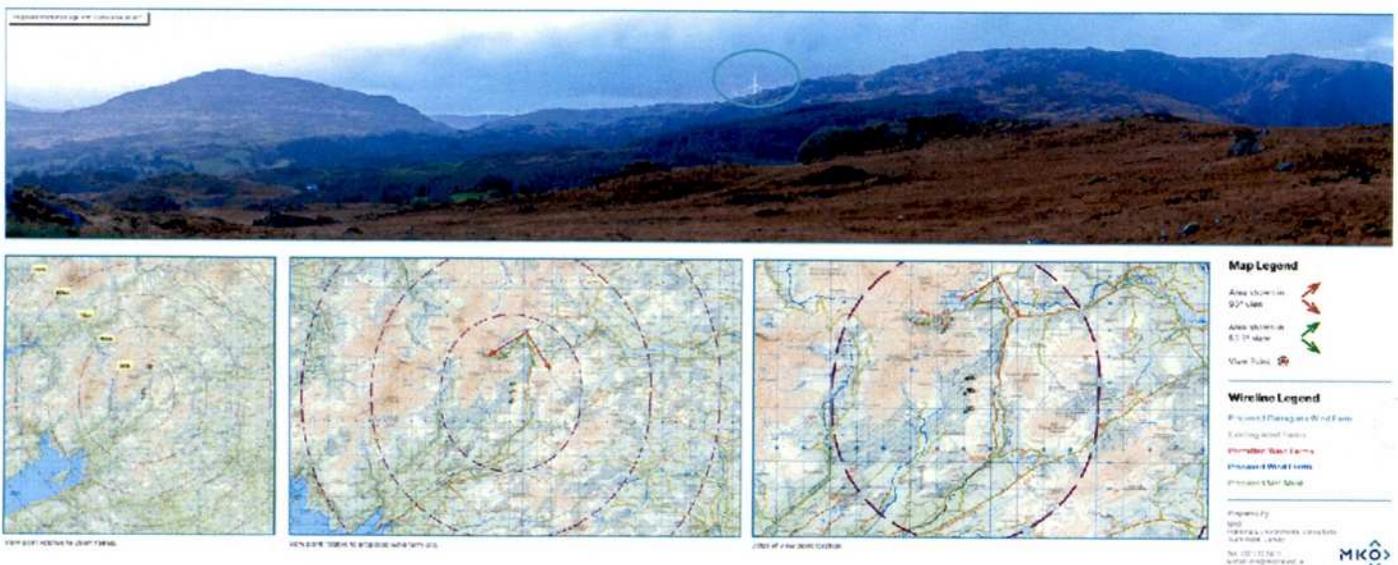


FIGURE 11: PHOTOMONTAGE AT 90° ILLUSTRATING VIEW FROM NORTH OF TURBINES³²



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³¹ View from the L-87812 Local Road / Slí Gaeltacht Mhúscraí walking trail, within the townland on Coomacrobeg. Located approximately 1.9km west from the nearest proposed turbine. MKO.

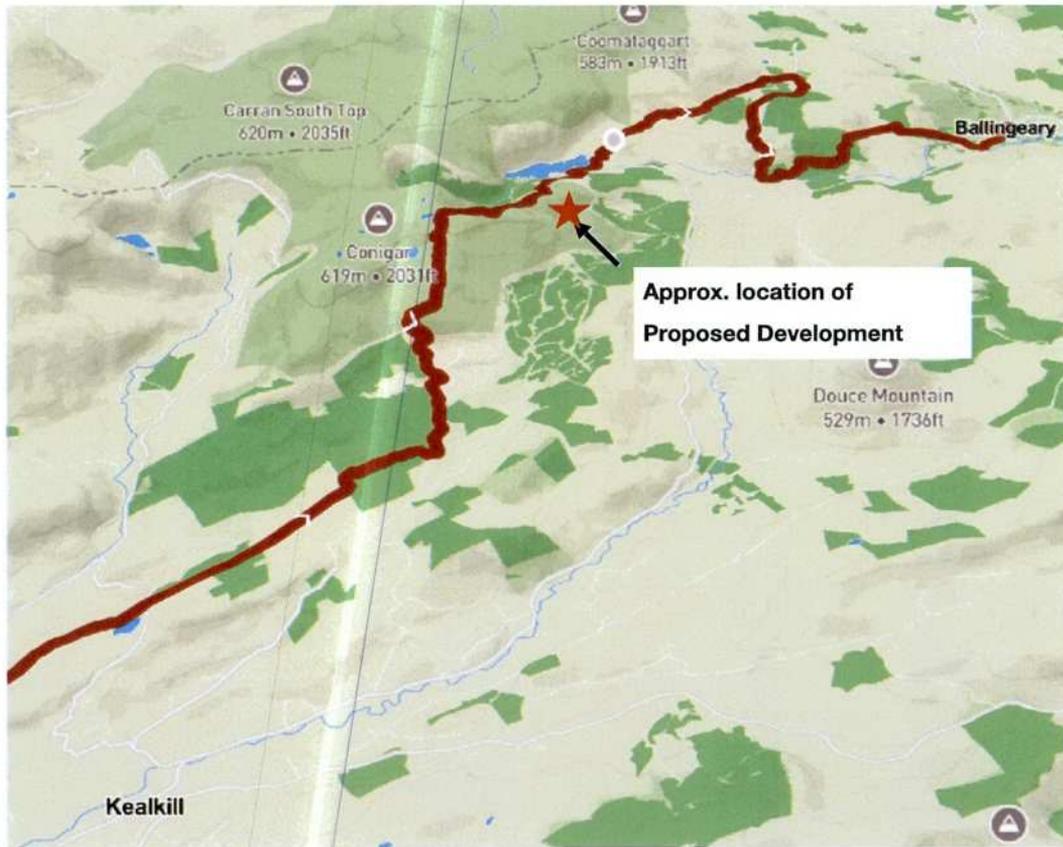
³² View from the C-SR-27 designated scenic route / Slí Gaeltacht Mhúscraí Waymarked Walking Trail / L-7406 Local Road, within the townland of Rossalougha. Located approximately 4.9km north from the nearest proposed turbine (T1). MKO.

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FIGURE 12: BEARA BREIFNE LOCAL ROUTE MAP³³



7.9. Scenic Routes. As outlined in Table 5, it is not considered that the Proposed Development will have an impact on the two scenic routes identified in the area: the R584 between Balingeary and Kealkill which passes through the Pass of Keimaneigh, and the R548 north of the Site that connects to Gougane Barra. As a result, their value as tourism assets will not be impacted.

7.10. The turbines will have limited impact on the scenic route along R585. However, as the impact is not expected to be significant due to the route's distance from the proposed turbines, due to the low level of tourism in the area (as discussed in 6 above) and the lack of evidence that wind farms are perceived as negative by tourists (ref. 7.3 and 7.4 above), the impact on the tourism value of the route is considered to be not significant.

³³ Interactive Map of Beara Breifne Way, <https://hiiker.app/trails/ireland/county-cork/beara-breifne-way/stages/213174>.

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TABLE 5: ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL IMPACT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF CURRAGLASS RENEWABLE ENERGY ON LOCAL SCENIC ROUTES

Characteristic	Impact	Description
Quality	Neutral	<p>Considering the proposed location of the three turbines, the height of surrounding landscape and the line of sight from routes, it is not expected that the turbines will be visible from the R584 through the Pass of Keimaneigh nor the R548.</p> <p>The potential visibility of the turbines has been assessed by MKO from a number of relevant points (see Figures 13 and 14 below).</p> <p>These have also been further assessed by CHL on a Site inspection (see Figure 15 below).</p>
Significance	Imperceptible / not significant	
Extent and Context	Limited visibility of the turbines at a distance for those driving, walking or cycling along sections of R585 only (see Figure 14).	
Probability	Likely	
Duration and frequency	<p>long term, i.e. the lifespan of the wind farm.</p> <p>See also Extent and Context.</p> <p>There will be a moderate temporary impact during the construction phase as work vehicles access the Site from the R584.</p>	

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FIGURE 13: PHOTOMONTAGE AT 90° ILLUSTRATING VIEW FROM R548 OF TURBINES³⁴

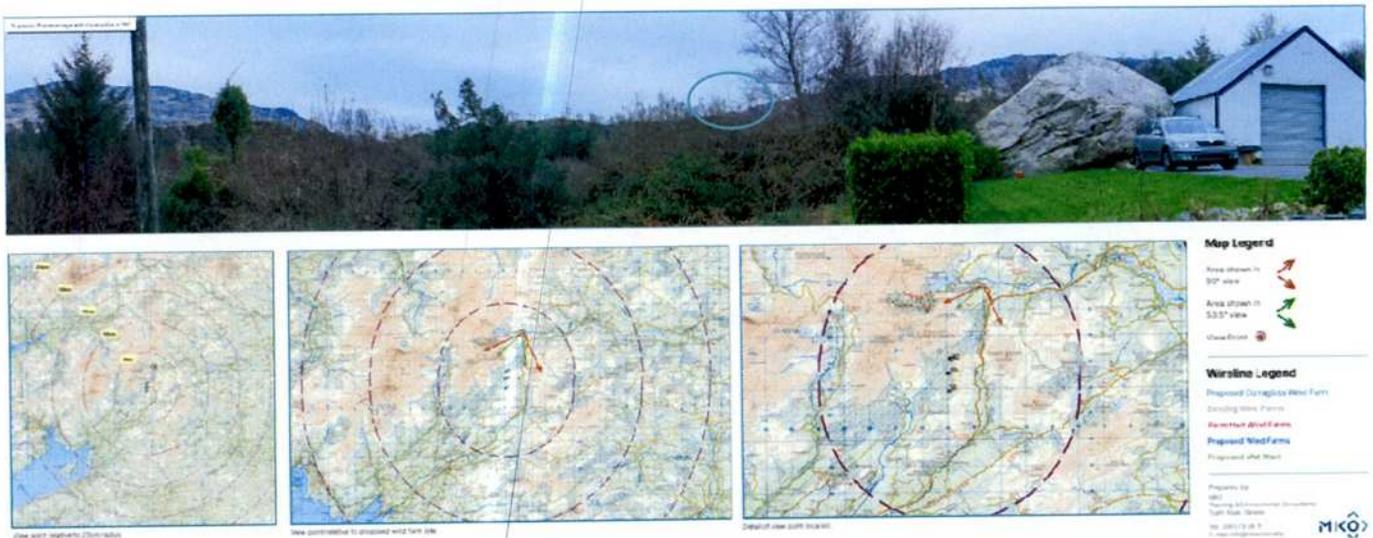
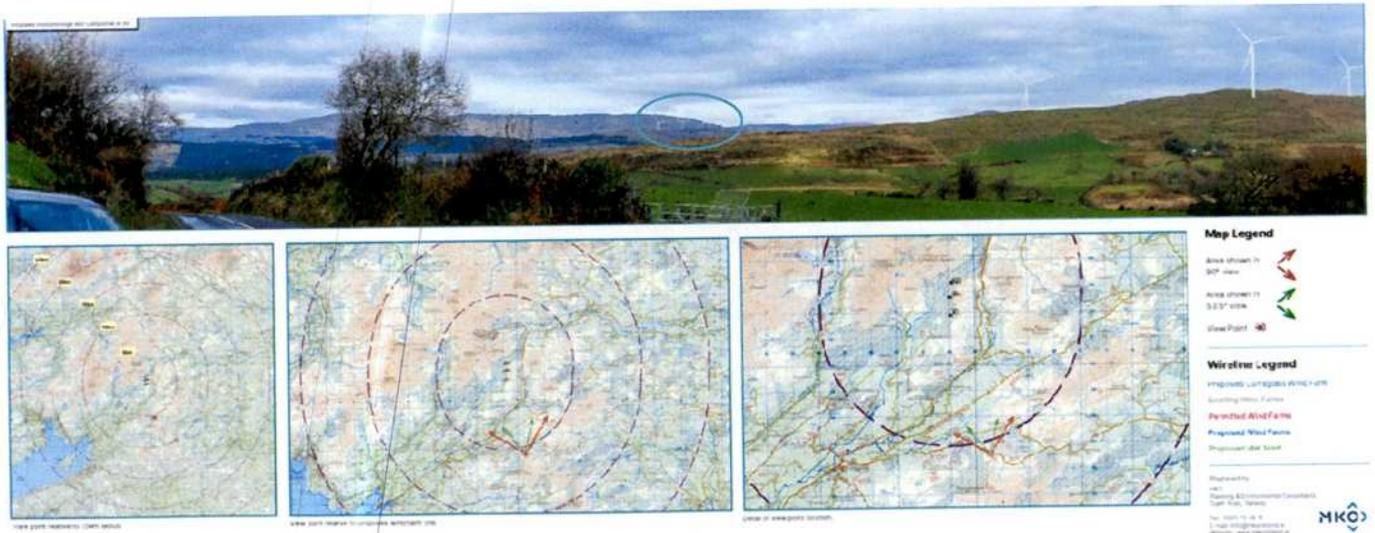


FIGURE 14: PHOTOMONTAGE AT 90° ILLUSTRATING VIEW FROM R585 OF TURBINES³⁵
(showing Proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm nearer to the right)



³⁴ View from the C-SR-28 designated scenic route / R548 Regional Road, within the townland of Garrynapeaka. Located approximately 3km north from the nearest proposed turbine (T1). MKO.

³⁵ View from the C-SR-29 designated scenic route / R585 Regional Road, within the townland of Maughanaclea. Located approximately 5.6km south from the nearest proposed turbine (T3). MKO.

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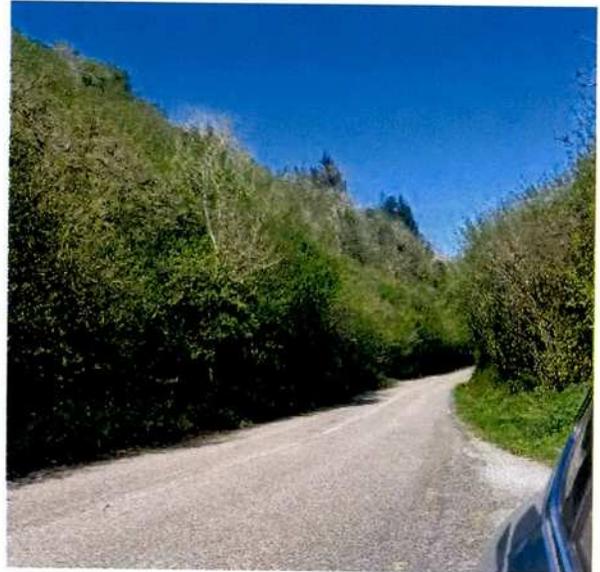
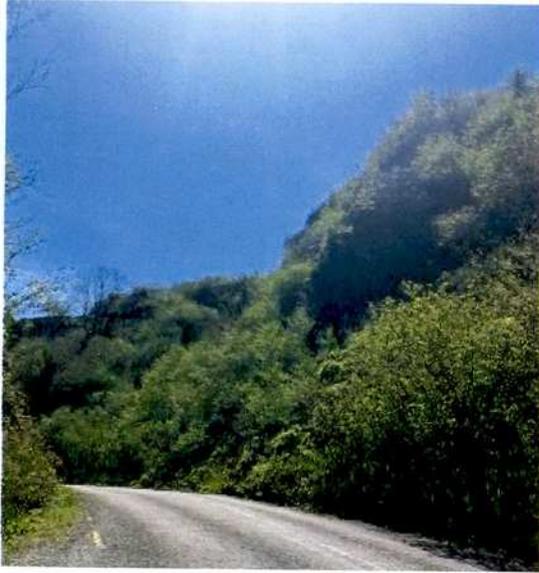
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FIGURE 15: PASS OF KEIMANEIGH: NARROW VISIBILITY DUE TO HIGH WALLS OF THE PASS³⁶



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³⁶ CHL Site Visit, May 2025.

8. Cumulative Impact

8.1. There is concern that the Proposed Development would exacerbate the cumulative landscape impact of wind farm development on tourism and amenity sites in the area (Inspector's Report 2024, ABP-315656-23). The location of existing wind farms has been considered by MKO and is described in the EIAR, Appendix 2-3. This was also considered by CHL by review of the cumulative list of projects provided by MKO and as part of the site inspection, during which the following notes were made in relation to the visibility of existing turbines.

- Some wind turbines are visible in the distance driving along sections of the R584 travelling from Ballingearry to the Pass of Keimaneigh but their impact is moderate.
- Driving southwards from the Pass of Keimaneigh to Kealkill no turbines are visible.
- Taking the R585 for about 2kms northwards out of Kealkill, the tips of four turbines are visible in the far distance.
- Doubling back and driving the R584 northwards, the tips of the same turbines are visible for a few kms but no longer visible by the time you reach Future Forests Garden Centre, coming back into view sporadically as the road twists and turns.
- Driving from the Pass of Keimaneigh to Gougane Barra, the tips of two/three turbines are just about visible in the far distance but no longer visible at Gougane Barra itself.

8.2. CHL's conclusion is that there will not be a negative cumulative impact as a result of the Proposed Development.

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9. Conclusions

- 9.1. The Proposed Development is located in West Cork, a popular summer destination for domestic families and a region that is attractive due to its coastal scenery and supporting outdoor activities, including: walking, cycling, sailing and other water-based activities.
- 9.2. Most tourism activity is clustered along the coast and in the main coastal towns of Clonakilty, Skibbereen and Bantry, as evidenced by the distribution of tourist accommodation in these areas.
- 9.3. The more westerly areas of West Cork are considered by Fáilte Ireland to have a low tourism profile, with some domestic market recognition, and to have a highly seasonal pattern of tourism as well as consisting of a high proportion of day trippers.
- 9.4. The Proposed Development location and immediate surrounding area has a low level of tourism assets. Three assets have been identified in this TIA as warranting further consideration with regard to potential impact: the Gougane Barra Site (including the hotel, oratory, forest park and other elements); the local section of the Beara Breifne Way / Sheep's Head Way / Slí Gaeltacht Mhúscraí / St. Finbarr's Way; and scenic routes at R584 and R548.
- 9.5. It is not considered that the Proposed Development will have a significant impact on the Gougane Barra Site nor on its tourism value.
- 9.6. It is considered that the Proposed Development has the potential to have a negative impact on the local section of the Beara Breifne Way. However, the impact is assessed as not significant.
- 9.7. It is considered that the Proposed Development will not have an impact on the two scenic routes identified in the area: the R584 between Ballingeary and Kealkill which passes through the Pass of Keimaneigh, and the R548.

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- 9.8. It is considered that there will not be a cumulative negative impact on tourism as a result of the Proposed Development.

- 9.9. On balance, this TIA concludes that the Proposed Development as described in Chapter 4 Description of the Proposed Development in the EIAR will not have a significant negative impact on tourism in the area nor on the value of tourism assets.

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